

Golf superintendents keeping 'Eden' green

BY MARK LESLIE

To John Ebel and a host of other golf course superintendents, they are in the world's oldest occupation.

"Adam was the first greenkeeper, if you read the scripture (Gen. 2:15); God put Adam in the garden to work it and take care of it," said Ebel, the superintendent at Barrington Hills (Ill.) Country Club who with several colleagues has organized annual Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Prayer Breakfasts since 1980.

"We hope that as we all meet in fellowship that the prayer breakfast will grow and increase fellowship among our members and that we may share God's love and support each other through the promises of God, and that His Kingdom may be increased," Ebel said.

Indeed, the breakfast has grown tremendously in just 10 years.

Rosey Grier gave a stirring talk before a fullhouse of 400 people at February's GCSAA International Golf Conference and Show in Anaheim, Calif.

NFL chaplain Doc Eshleman, air-crash survivor Norman Williams, and Mike Adkins are among the other past speakers at the



John Ebel

breakfasts.

"Our purpose is to glorify God in our lives," Ebel said, "and I think golf course superintendents have a unique position in recognizing God's handiwork and His omnipotence in what we do because we are at the mercy of conditions beyond our control.

"His glory is all around us. We see it every day and we just tend it."

The seed for the breakfast was planted in

1975 when "several people in our organization sensed the need and saw that the spiritual aspect of our profession was really missing," Ebel said. "We have much professional, educational and other things like that to offer but we didn't offer anything spiritually."

In 1980 the seed germinated when Ebel and his wife, Juanita, "stepped out in faith" to bring the first Prayer Breakfast to the St. Louis conference. John had secured a speaker he felt would communicate well with golf course people. The GCSAA assigned them a room at the conference hotel and scheduled the meeting as the first on the agenda.

The Ebels drove around in a taxi the night before, looking for a Dunkin' Donuts, and brought back 12 dozen doughnuts to serve with coffee.

One hundred and twelve people showed up. "That was very encouraging," Ebel says.

The encouragement has continued. A core group of GCSAA members from the Chicago area meets every month or two. Other people are getting involved, Ebel said, "and we feel there will be others coming along to keep it going."

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Group's directors

The GCSAA members involved in the Prayer Breakfasts have incorporated under the state of Illinois and have received charitable status.

Directors are:

- Len Berg of Village Greens of Woodridge in Woodridge, Ill.
- John Ebel of Barrington Hills (Ill.) Country Club.
- Tim Kelly of Village Links of Glen Ellyn in Glen Ellyn, Ill.
- Palmer Maples of Summit Chase Country Club in Lawrenceville, Ga.
- Jim Reed of Chicago Turf and Irrigation Co. in Itaska, Ill.
- Bruce Sering of Glenview (Ill.) Club.

Ebel said the GCSAA members have firm objectives in coordinating the breakfasts: "to seek God's blessing on the GCSAA conference, its affairs, our nation, our membership, our directors, our staff, and to share God's love."

Hodnick replaces Kurtz for STMA

Mark Hodnick, Cal Poly at Pomona's superintendent of grounds, has been named to replace his former teacher, the retired Dr. Kent Kurtz, as executive director of the Sport Turf Managers Association.

Kurtz, who received a life membership in STMA in recognition of his work, will serve as the association's education coordinator for national and regional conferences, a newly created position. During his five-year tenure, the group grew from 60 members to nearly 900.

PGA of America makes changes

O'Brien and Steranka earn promotions...

The Professional Golfers' Association of America has promoted two executives to the newly-created level of senior director.

Joe O'Brien, a member of the headquarters management staff for 16 years, has been named senior director of strategic planning.

Joe Steranka, director of communications and public relations the past year, will be senior director of marketing and promotion.

O'Brien will work directly with the international management and consulting firm of Booz, Allen and Hamilton, retained to

assist the PGA in development of a five-year strategic plan.

The comprehensive study will provide input in several key areas.

Steranka brings ten years of sports marketing experience to his new position. He will be responsible for all PGA marketing programs, including sales and licensing, and a new golf promotions department which will manage programs such as the Oldsmobile Scramble and National Golf Day.

Steranka also will oversee the PGA Merchandise Show and the PGA Junior golf program.

... while Still nabbed for new position



Bob Still

Taking hold of what he called "a terrific opportunity," former Golf Course Superintendents Association of America media relations director Bob Still has started a new job as one of three marketing managers in the PGA of America marketing department.

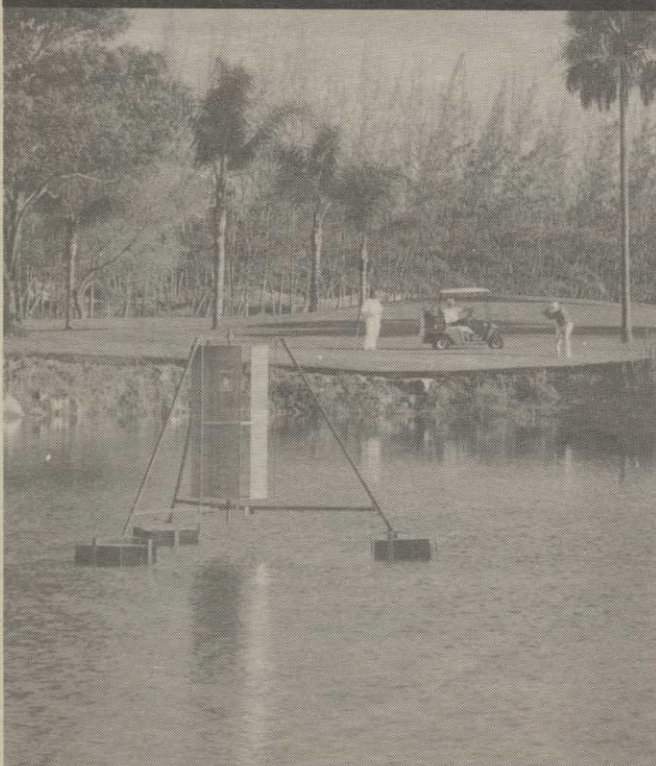
Working under Joe Steranka, senior director of marketing and promotions, Still will be involved in all aspects of licensing and tournament sponsors for PGA of America.

"I'm excited because it's a terrific opportunity, and a whole new area for me as well," Still said before starting the job on June 19. "It's a whole new challenge. I'll be dealing with tournament sponsors and that's where golf is going; it has become very sponsor-oriented."

Still has been involved for several years coordinating the Len Dawson golf tournament. At the GCSAA the former broadcaster developed commercials for national and regional golf telecasts, a poster campaign and the association's media guide.

PGA of America, he said, "has made assurances it's going to be a promising, rewarding career."

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